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## CURRENT OPINION

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### **The League of Nations**

In the *New Republic* for January 26, 1918, is a clear-cut article which reviews the development of the war and shows that the world has not taken the League of Nations idea seriously. Yet this is the great principle for which, ostensibly, America is fighting. It must be taken seriously. It is the only possible alternative to the old competition for territory and power which implies annexation of unwilling provinces, armament, militarism, secret diplomacy, and the frustration of democracy. If this old order is to continue after the war, America will have obtained nothing positive for which she is fighting—certainly not a world safe for democracy.

The League of Nations *must* be taken seriously. The first step should be a public pact made now among the Allies dealing with the following objects:

1. Political security for every nation resting upon a league of nations, broadly but definitely outlined, with conditions which would permit the enemy peoples to enter.
2. Equality of economic opportunity secured by equal access to raw materials, to the economic development of backward states, suitable seaports for landlocked states, by internationalization of trans-continental railways and straits.
3. Democratization of the conduct of international relations by insuring in the congresses of the peace settlement representation of the legislative as well as the executive side of government and of the minority parties in the legislature.

This provision for representation of minority parties will win the Socialists to support the major aims of the war or their opposition will be proven to be based on other than democratic grounds. Representation in the peace congresses

of minorities and of the legislative section of the governments is absolutely essential. Only in that way will the vigorous thinkers who believe in the new era of unprecedented things have a chance to defend their case. "So long as the virtual conduct of international affairs, the various steps in negotiations, is in the hands of executive branches of the national government and preponderatingly in the hands of the foreign offices, decisive power in such affairs will always be autocratic whatever the form of those governments at home." If we were to insist now on proportionate representation of legislatures at the peace conference we would by that very demand have given parliamentary institutions to Germany. "Such is probably the only way in which the principle of 'no peace with the present German rulers' could be carried into effect." "To take the President seriously, to convert his 'idealism' into policy, the common policy of the Allies, is the price of victory as it is the promise of permanent peace."

### **Speculation in Science and Philosophy**

This is the title of an article in the *Open Court* for December, written by J. W. Buckham, in which he shows that natural science is intensely speculative and not the factual, practical discipline the ordinary layman supposes it to be. The test of scientific speculation is adequate verification, but many of the theories of science, for example, Weismann's germ-plasm theory of heredity, can never be verified by objective proof. The truth of scientific theories is empirical, relative, and contingent. Verification is always progressive, never complete; partial, never exhaustive. Does science know what electricity, ether, or gravitation is? No. But she quite prop-

erly continues nevertheless to speculate, to experiment, and to achieve. The dangers which threaten science today are those from which theology is just escaping, dogmatism and self-sufficiency—the idea that her interpretation of the universe is the sole and absolute truth.

In the realm of the rational, the moral, and the spiritual we start with certain facts of experience such as self-consciousness, worth, freedom, other selves, God. These facts touch our happiness and our higher life more closely than the facts of science. To understand, correlate and interpret, and thus make the best use of these facts of personality it is necessary to speculate concerning them. Speculation will not disclose their ultimate nature any more than in the realm of science, but it throws light upon them and renders them more intelligible. Yet there is a cry today: "Stick to the facts; let theories alone." This attitude is timid, reactionary, non-progressive. Two virile movements today represent the protest against overspeculation—Pragmatism and Ritschlianism. But speculation is necessary if theology and philosophy are not to lag behind science in the path of progress. "Science has dismissed her fear of the unknown: let not philosophy and theology retreat into the cave of agnosticism." Speculate, but demand verification. When facts are contradicted, speculation needs revision. "The next step toward a more comprehensive and harmonious life-philosophy lies in the mutual recognition, on the part of truth-seekers in both fields, of the distinctness of their tasks and the relatedness of their results."

### **Christianity and the Church**

A sympathetic criticism of the established church in England from the pen of Edith Picton-Turbervill appears in the *Nineteenth Century and After* for December. If the task of the church is to interpret the

Christian ideal to the nation, then it must be admitted that the church has failed. There need be no surprise, therefore, that it has failed to be a power in the crisis of national history created by the war. And there seems to be small hope of reform. "The organized church seems to be capable of dealing only with matters that are really immaterial, to the larger issues. To these larger issues the church appears to be almost indifferent." The laity might change the situation but they have no power. The hierarchical ministry, bishops, priests, and deacons, govern the church. In the fear of sacrificing dogma or making a deeper chasm between the English and the Roman and Eastern churches the emphasis is put on creedal tests with the result that many of the best men are lost to the ministry and the missionary work.

The deep need is for a better understanding of the informal spirituality of Jesus and for a reconsideration of the problem of the Episcopate and priesthood in the light of the New Testament. The leaders are apparently not seeking the truth but for the sake of the power and dignity of the church are defending a position. The common people "no longer believe that bishops and priests, either as a body or as individuals, are necessarily more under the guidance of the Holy Spirit or channels of the Spirit than other people." "Men on the battlefield have found that ordinary good men have shown as much self-sacrifice, love, tenderness, and Christ-living as ordained ministers." After the war the church leaders will feel the pressure of democracy, and the interpretations of religion will be more in the hands of the laity. It will be a good thing for the church. To change dogma and alter the Episcopal status will not destroy but re-create the church. The English church needs converting. It must forget its dignity and deal with vital matters, with such things as woman problems and the labor movement. Many church men

and women have drifted from the real life of the church. The mass of the people are not only untouched by its influence but are even contemptuous toward it. There is a profound feeling that the church is not sincere. Surely the general awakening of the nation to new life must find some expression within the church.

### **The Dangers of Democracy**

In the *Constructive Quarterly* for September Dean Shailer Mathews sounds a warning as to the dangers which attend a triumphant democracy. Democracy is winning its way in every field of human life. In its success new danger lies. If democrats are to achieve real democracy they must avoid the pitfalls into which so many of their predecessors have fallen. The only institutions which show themselves capable of permanent development are those which embody genuinely personal, spiritual qualities. Democracy is a social growth of real people moving onward from one stage of social evolution to a higher. If spiritual forces are given freedom the development of the world under this ideal will be nobler than our best dreams.

But a triumphant democracy must not substitute centralized efficiency for personal values. True democracies are not easily mobilized, and the very demand for efficiency might lead to a capitalistic imperialism under the control of financial masters. It is better to suffer some degree of economic inefficiency than to lose freedom, personal initiative, spiritual uplift, freedom of thought and speech. The goal of democracy is not the efficient state but the social-minded individual.

Another danger of successful democracy is materialism. Economic gain is not the final test. The loss of individual freedom, of regard for honor, truth, and goodness is too high a price to pay for prosperity. The stress of war tends to suppress and sink the individual, but the state is more than a big

business. To keep spiritual idealism in the soul of the nation is at this time the urgent task of the church. Ecclesiasticism, traditionalism, creedal bonds, and antiquated thought-forms hamper the church in this task; but the church must rise to its high duty as guide of the life of the human spirit or be superseded.

Again, a successful democracy must learn to give justice rather than to get rights. Capitalism and privilege must learn this lesson if democracy is to be safe. "Our spiritual challenge of today is to believe that it is as noble to give rights as it is to fight for rights."

A successful democracy must rely upon contagious idealism rather than upon force. The ideals of Jesus are the ideals of peace—but this is a goal rather than a description of human life. A nation of high social ideals must sometimes defend its ideals against a brute power of lower ideals. Nevertheless a triumphant democracy must move forward step by step away from reliance upon force to a whole-hearted devotion to spiritual aims. "We shall protect our developing democracy by force of arms but we shall expect its ultimate triumph through the socializing of good-will."

An article which comes from the pen of Mr. W. S. Lilly in the October number of the *Nineteenth Century and After*, entitled "The Newest Fetish," is distinctly pessimistic in regard to modern democracy. For the most part the animus of the writer is against Socialism, which he sees to be the natural goal of democracy. Mr. Lilly is anxious to point out what he considers to be the neglected factors of modern democracy. That all men have natural rights is true—that all men have equal rights is false. "Modern democracy rests upon the doctrine of the absolute equality of political right." It is a false doctrine. Yet there is a true sense in the proposition, "all men are equal." All men are equal as *persons*. Hence their equality before the law. Hence

too the necessity of having the consent of the governed to assure the justice of a law. But voting is only one out of many channels in which consent may be given. To talk of the inherent right of a majority of voters to command is an absurdity. "We may reasonably prefer the ballot-box to the shillelah: to count heads is a more pacific process than to break them, although it is in itself an equally irrational process." While wise men will not pin their faith to majorities, yet it is possible to admit that universal suffrage is an expression of the equality of all men as persons and therefore a recognition of their title to some share of political power. Moreover it ought to engender patriotism and intelligent interest in the affairs of the country. But after admitting these things there remains the fact that human society is essentially hierarchical. The state is not a fortuitous congeries of unrelated human units, all alike; it is an organism and an ethical organism—"a true person, absolutely subject, like the persons composing it, to the moral law." As an organism it consists of parts not uniform but diverse, representing various degrees of individuality, fulfilling distinct functions graduated in importance and all co-operant to the end, of the common weal: elements in the body politic far more important than numbers and not to be set aside without grievous loss. These elements modern democracy ignores, making a mere preponderance of votes, quite apart from right reason, the first and last law. The author's view is an apotheosis of brute force than which nothing can be more unethical. While postulating the rights of all it confiscates the rights of the minority.

But, we ask in rebuttal, is this a fair view of democracy?

We believe it is not.

### **Problems of Reconstruction**

Mr. L. P. Jacks has written an article which will give rise to much serious objection

in the October number of the *Hibbert Journal*. He feels that the elimination of war from the world would be a peril fully as great as any in which war has ever involved the human race. While it may be wise to take the great risk, it ought to be taken with our eyes open to the facts. This article is intended to point out the social changes the abolition of war would involve—that it would be nothing less than a break-up of the form of human society represented by the existing great empires of the world. In interfering with war we would interfere with the functions of existing governments, with the political systems behind them, with a complex of social conditions, with the aims, character, and temper of vast populations, all of which have grown to be what they are now under the need of making war. If war is abolished, with it will go a multitude of forces now active in government, in industrial economy, and in human character; a multitude of other forces will be liberated, good and bad, which are now under restraint, and the result will certainly be radical and may be revolutionary. The whole fabric of western civilization has been built for other purposes than sustaining a life of universal peace and would have to undergo profound structural changes.

Mr. Jacks shows that all the great states of the modern world have been war-made and throughout their history have been war-maintained. "Remembering this it is not difficult to understand the genius for war and the readiness for adjusting their state machinery to war which the nations are now displaying." This necessity of maintaining their existence by the sword has left its mark in every social and political institution. It has penetrated into every fiber of social organization and colored the whole character of development. Mr. Jacks cites as instances the system of taxation which is based on the needs of war in the form of past debts and future contingencies; and the entire industrial system, which,

when carefully surveyed, shows that the development of production and distribution is now what it is because of the war menace. There has been the constant necessity of adjusting the process of democratic growth to a multitude of strains and pressures which have their origin in the war aims and war relations of war-made empires.

If war has made the empires of the world, who made the wars? It was never the people. They accepted war but the war itself was always the work of dynasties, governments, ruling classes, statesmen, and chancellors who never represented the people at this point but who were the agents or tools of the system which was not subject to popular control. The great empires of the world are not the creations of the popular will. Moreover it requires almost no thought to see that the popular will has never controlled them.

If war were abolished by the establishment of a League of Nations to maintain a general peace, what would be the fate of the war-made empires of the western world? The Germany of "blood and iron" would disappear. There would be no military necessity for maintaining the British Empire. Regarding India, for example, Britain has always maintained that she must hold it in order to guard against internal warfare and foreign attack. But in the new era the League of Nations would take care of that and there would be no logical reason for maintaining control. All through the empire, centrifugal tendencies would gain in power.

A strange problem in international ethics would develop. Young and ambitious nations would seek to expand and would either find the way blocked or resort to force as did the present world-nations. The League of Nations would be compelled to enforce the rule, "no development through war." The war-made empires would forbid to others the very means they used them-

selves. How could a system of international right or morality rest on that basis? The only logical thing would be for the Great Powers to relinquish their possessions. Now they are held intact as fighting units. With release from the danger of war there would be a general landslide of social and economic conditions which could only be described as a break-up of the present form of society.

There are psychological factors to consider also. With the spirit of combativeness would go a vast array of human characteristics. This spirit is registered in every department of life—in politics, commerce, theology, and even philosophy.

Abolish war and nothing would be left as it was. "Abolish war, and we pull out the linchpin of empire, we alter the basis of all national groupings, we give a new goal to industrial endeavor, we deny a field of exercise to one of the most active of the acquired characteristics of mankind." Such changes, Mr. Jacks thinks, should not be incurred blindly.

The *Union Theological Seminary Bulletin* gives the address of President A. C. McGiffert delivered at the opening of the Seminary. He emphasizes the need of strong leadership in the midst of the anxiety and sorrow of war, and the need of guidance as the war influences the most cherished faiths and highest ideals. "A war like this leaves unscathed only those who have no faiths and no ideals." "While some are fighting to make the world safe for democracy, others must labor to keep democracy safe for the world." We must beware lest we lose our life in trying to save it.

Some of the demoralizing effects of war are evident—the nervous fear that sees enemies everywhere; the intolerance which would suppress all differences of opinion; the hatred that is overcoming charity; the blindness that values physical power above moral character; the greed that would make personal profit out of the war.

These are our foes. The nation must be lifted to a higher level than that of force fighting in blind anger or even in self-defense. America must battle with her enemies in the spirit of devotion to the world's good. This guidance and vision the minister must give. But the task of reconstruction after the war is the most important problem of all. "No world could pass through such an experience as our world is passing through without tremendous cost, material, intellectual, spiritual, and recovery will be possible only as men everywhere give themselves to the labor of restoration and building." The task of religious reconstruction is especially arduous. Christianity has fallen into widespread disrepute. Men need religion more than ever, yet Christianity seems to have lost its grip. It could not prevent the war. Worse still, claiming to be the religion of brotherhood and a universal religion, it nevertheless has become the creature of the various warring nations, supporting the purposes and opposite ideals of each group of combatants. Multitudes are thinking of Christianity as either a half-hearted thing or else a curse to the world. Christianity must be shown to be good. It must be set forth in its true light in order to restore the world's confidence. This means a new Christianity. It will not do to read Christianity in the old terms. The world must be given a better faith. God can never be a nation's God alone. To believe in divine fatherhood must be understood not as a doctrine but as a world-program. The indolent and selfish doctrine of forgiveness must be rebuilt so

as to make it impossible for Christians to tolerate injuries which crush other people. "To reinterpret the Christian faith in the light of the experiences of these terrible years, that it may do its part in helping to build a better world when peace comes, is the Christian minister's peculiar task."

There are two great public needs: one is democracy and the other internationalism. Democracy gives every man his chance; Christianity helps him to improve it. Democracy by itself is only negative. It is Christianity's task to give it positive content and transform it into true brotherhood. The second task is to make internationalism a part of the Christian ideal and to put behind it the driving power of Christian devotion and consecration; to back with the Christian power, not the internationalism of Socialism with its class-consciousness, nor the internationalism of Ecclesiasticism which puts loyalty to church before loyalty to country, nor any form of internationalism which undermines or destroys patriotism, but an internationalism in which every nation, made just and generous by the patriotic devotion of its citizens, shall live righteously and brotherly with all the family of nations.

The church has been too narrow in the vision of its task—to save men out of the world instead of saving the world; to stop war instead of christianizing all the relations of nation with nation. "The world needs, not a conscience that declares war wrong, but a conscience that leads men so to live that war becomes unnecessary."